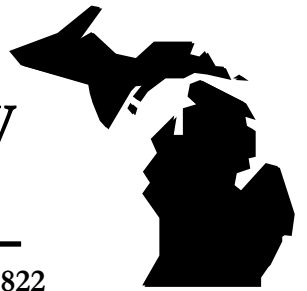




UNITED STATES SENATOR · MICHIGAN  
**DEBBIE STABENOW**  
PRESS RELEASE



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Contact: Dave Lemmon, Shanna Singh  
Phone: 202-224-4822

**U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow Urges President Bush to Ask for  
Resignation of U.S. Civil Rights Commission Member Peter Kirsanow**  
*Stabenow Encourages President to Appoint Commission  
Member of Middle Eastern Descent*

WASHINGTON—U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) today released a letter to President Bush expressing great concern over recent comments made by U.S. Civil Rights Commission member Peter Kirsanow. The Senator is urging the President to ask Mr. Kirsanow to step down.

**A copy of Senator Stabenow's letter to President Bush follows:**

\* \* \*

Dear Mr. President:

Coming from the State of Michigan, I really appreciate the tone of tolerance and acceptance you have set since September 11<sup>th</sup> towards Arab and Muslim Americans. However, I am deeply disturbed by news reports of the recent comments made by U.S. Civil Rights Commission member Peter Kirsanow at a public hearing in Detroit that another terrorist attack on the United States means that we "can forget civil rights in this country," and that it could lead to the round up and mass detention of all Arab and Muslim Americans – like Japanese Americans during World War II.

I realize that Mr. Kirsanow was responding to earlier testimony by Mr. Roland Hwang, a Lansing attorney, who voiced concern regarding widespread civil rights violations against Arab Americans, and that U.S. antiterrorism efforts could prompt a return to internment camps. However, when asked to clarify his stand by a Detroit Free Press reporter, Mr. Kirsanow responded, "not too many people will be crying in their beer if there are more detentions, more stops, more profiling." If these comments as reported are true, I find Mr. Kirsanow's comments both insensitive and disturbing on several levels, and I would urge you to call on Mr. Kirsanow to resign from the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

I am concerned that Mr. Kirsanow's remarks imply that the only way to avoid another terrorist attack and a return to Karematsu and internment camps is by surrendering our civil rights. This kind of fear mongering displays Mr. Kirsanow's complete misunderstanding of his position. As a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Mr. Kirsanow should be working to protect civil rights for all Americans, not using scare tactics and fears of future terrorist attacks to justify the mistreatment of Arab and Muslim Americans.

**continued**

**Stabenow Letter to President**  
**July 25, 2002**  
**Page Two**

Given the fact that your Administration has stated several times that further terrorist attacks are inevitable, Mr. Kirsanow's comments pander to the worst elements of our society by saying a wave of hatred is also unavoidable when those attacks occur. This is exactly the wrong message to send. It offers an excuse to those who would divide us by religion or nationality by giving bigotry the cover of understandable inevitability.

Mr. Kirsanow's comments also demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of the increased racial profiling and questioning that Arab and Muslim Americans have experienced since September 11<sup>th</sup> based on their appearance, their names or their places of worship. In addition, his comments display a real insensitivity toward a tragic period in our nation's history and our government's treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Finally, I believe Mr. Kirsanow's comments could not be further from the truth. Mr. Kirsanow underestimates Americans' commitment to freedom and tolerance, and ignores the outpouring of unity and patriotism by all Americans that occurred after September 11th. While there were sporadic attacks on mosques and Arab-owned businesses, the vast majority of Americans, regardless of race or religion, reached out to each other and came together through community service, charity and prayer to help our country heal.

In such an important time in our nation's history, we need to ensure that the U.S. Civil Rights Commission is composed of members who are sensitive to Arab and Muslim communities who already feel marginalized, and who understand the importance of protecting the civil rights of all Americans. I would urge you to call on Mr. Kirsanow to resign and to appoint an American of Middle Eastern descent who can better represent these communities' concerns.

Sincerely,

Debbie Stabenow